



REVITALIZATION AND REDEVELOPMENT AD-HOC COMMITTEE

The meeting of the Miami Springs Revitalization and Redevelopment Ad-Hoc Committee was held on Monday, May 21, 2012 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

Present were: Chairman Laz Martinez
Vice Chairman Todd Stiff
Arturo Rabade
Juan Saborido*
Fernando Suco

*Arrived at 7:17 p.m.

Also Present: City Planner Jim H. Holland
Building & Zoning Office Director Harold "Tex" Ziadie
Deputy City Clerk Suzanne S. Hitaffer

2. Approval of Minutes: March 19, 2012

Vice Chair Stiff moved to approve the minutes as written. Committee member Rabade seconded the motion, which carried 4-0 on voice vote.

Chair Martinez asked City Planner Holland for a report on Calvin, Giordano's presentation at the last Council meeting.

City Planner Jim Holland provided a general update and the follow up from the last Council meeting. He said that amendments to the N. W. 36th Street District were passed on second reading and the new ordinance allows certain Administrative approval. There are more changes forthcoming involving signage and off-street loading.

City Planner Holland announced that Airbus is requesting space for additional simulators and given the nature of the building it will follow the administrative approval process.

City Planner Holland noted that several items were presented by Calvin, Giordano to the City Council. The first item was Work Order No. 2 for the aesthetic and theme package and a proposed pilot program for signage and wayfinding at the intersection of Deer Run and Curtiss Parkway for a cost of \$97,000 and this was put on hold.

Chair Martinez asked about the cost and if there were any other options other than to put the pilot program on hold.

City Planner Holland responded that there is a possibility of value engineering. The natural stone at the base of the signs is costly and non-existent in Adobe style architecture. He explained that nothing will be done at this point as far as the pilot program. He added that the street furniture and the signage are all custom built although there are less costly options on the market.

Chair Martinez expressed his concern about putting the project on hold and he suggested that there could be some modifications in order to implement the pilot program and show that the City is doing something to revitalize the area.

City Planner Holland indicated that the City does not have \$97,000 in the present budget and that the upcoming budget has an expected \$800,000 shortfall just to maintain the current level of services.

Vice Chair Stiff felt that the consultants misread the community. He is concerned that they are completely disconnected from reality and they must have had some idea that they were recommending expensive options and they were paid to do so.

*Mr. Saborido arrived at this time.

City Planner Holland explained that the consultant's response in their presentation to Council during the selection process was that they would find alternate funding sources. During a meeting with the City Administration last February, the consultant was surprised that the City did not have a Community Redevelopment Agenda (CRA).

City Planner Holland stated that the second part of the aesthetics theme package program is a building façade program for Downtown and 36th Street. Calvin, Giordano proposed that the City would provide matching fund grants totaling \$200,000 and that proposal was put on hold as well. Council advised the consultants that the City did not have the funds for a grant program.

Chair Martinez commented that business owners are concerned about what they will get back from their investments and how the rent will be affected. The rents will not go up substantially just because the buildings have a nice façade and the property owners would not want to invest \$10,000 in a matching grant unless there is some plan for the entire area.

Discussion ensued about the façade program and whether or not it was adopted by Council.

City Planner Holland said that the Abraham Tract was briefly discussed and there might be some changes in the airport zoning. There are two proposals for the Abraham Tract and one is under contract by a developer. He and the City Attorney are drafting modifications to the District boundary regulations that will be presented to Council in June.

City Planner Holland explained that it was determined that a Comprehensive Plan amendment is needed to increase the floor area ratio (FAR) in the Airport Golf District. He informed the Committee that Calvin, Giordano representatives were prepared to request approval of another Work Order for a Master Plan that was not well accepted by Council.

City Planner Holland stated that Calvin, Giordano presented a cost estimate for the City Hall façade totaling \$700,000, and at that point the City Manager made a decision to paint the building instead.

The Committee members thanked the City Planner for the update.

3. New Business:

a. Explanation of the Code Compliance Process

Chair Martinez stated that Code Compliance had been successful in the improvement of the commercial area. He congratulated the department for making progress even though some properties seem to be taking a long time. He explained that the Committee would like a better understanding of the process and what can be done to help implement the Code.

Building & Code Compliance Director Harold “Tex” Ziadie presented a broad overview of where the Code Compliance stands now and the history leading up to this time. He is grateful that the current Council had offered support in funding additional staff, allowing two part-time positions to be reinstated. In 2004, there were three full-time officers and now it has been reduced to one full-time officer. Currently there is one part-time open position and there has been 100% turnover of all office personnel; the full-time Code Compliance Officer is currently training staff and the training should be finished by July 1, 2012.

Mr. Ziadie understands that the Committee’s focus is on the commercial area, but the fact that must be recognized is that 96% of all new code compliance cases are in the residential zones. He continued to explain the methods of enforcing the Code.

Mr. Ziadie presented a slide show of newly painted and repaired buildings on Westward Drive and other improvements that remain to be done, including the building in the first block of Westward Drive, the Hook Square building and the roof on the Presbyterian church.

Mr. Ziadie explained that there are two types of violations. Tickets can be issued for civil infractions and they involve safety or sanitation hazards that cannot wait thirty-days. After a ticket is issued if there is still lack of compliance a notice is issued to appear before the Code Enforcement Board who can impose penalties and lien properties. He noted some examples of civil infractions.

Beyond civil infractions, there are normal violations for which the first step is a Courtesy Notice, followed by a Notice of Violation letter and the issuance of a summons to appear before the Code Enforcement Board. Most maintenance of property violations fall into this category, according to Mr. Ziadie. The normal time granted is 30-60 days and the property owner can ask for an extension under certain circumstances.

Chair Martinez asked about sign violations and Mr. Ziadie responded that most sign violations are civil infractions or some could be a normal violation.

Chair Martinez asked about the regulations for too many signs on a storefront since window signs can only cover a certain percentage.

Mr. Ziadie responded that the code states that no more than 15% of the window area in front of a store can be covered with a sign. He explained that this is part of the code that needs to be adjusted and when Council was informed of this they wanted to wait to review the entire sign code. Code Compliance has not cited the business owners for window coverage because there are portions of the sign code that must be clarified.

Committee member Rabade asked about commercial vehicle violations and Mr. Ziadie explained that any vehicle over one-ton capacity is considered a commercial vehicle according to the Code and this is one portion that needs to be changed.

Committee member Saborido asked about violations for businesses operating without a business license.

Mr. Ziadie responded that tenants within the bank building on N. W. 36th Street move in and out all the time and Code Compliance checks for licenses in a sweep once a year.

Committee member Saborido asked if liens are placed on the properties and Mr. Ziadie responded that the situation normally does not reach that point because tickets are issued to the tenant since it is a civil infraction.

Chair Martinez noted that the explanation of Code Compliance was the only item on the agenda for tonight. He asked the Committee members if they had any other thoughts or comments.

Chair Martinez asked Committee member Suco if he has read or reviewed the Dover Kohl study and suggested that he request a copy of the Dover Kohl and Lambert Study in order to see how funds were spent.

Chair Martinez is disappointed that projects are being put on hold because businesses are struggling in the Downtown area and business declines in the summer. He does not feel that enough is being done other than the façade program which was put on hold. He is glad that the City is going to paint City Hall.

Chair Martinez would like to know what the vision is and what Council has in mind because it seems like there is a lack of understanding on the part of the consultants and they should have known that the City does not have excess funds. He feels that there must be something that the City can do to improve.

City Planner Holland said that he is planning to recommend another market study because the last study is old and the data is invalid. He is going to make a proposal for next year's budget.

Chairman Martinez asked if the \$167,000 is what is left from the original \$200,000 that was set aside for revitalization and City Planner Holland replied that work orders had been issued for \$167,000 but the amount in the dedicated fund was \$200,000.

To answer Chairman Martinez's question, City Planner Holland stated that he is only requesting proposals which will probably go out within the next three or four weeks.

City Planner Holland explained that he does not know the cost, but by focusing on a single sector, hotels, the cost should be relatively low.

City Planner Holland commented that they will possibly have to identify the ownerships of the properties in house and see which ones are available potentially and how they can be packaged. There are absentee owners for the most part in the Downtown area which presents another set of issues all together.

Chair Martinez asked how all of this tied in with the strategic plan and City Planner Holland said that the strategic plan has a goal of increasing the tax base on the commercial area.

Chair Martinez said that the revitalization component of the strategic plan calls for an economic development plan. He asked if that is something that is being worked on.

City Planner Holland stated that he believes that there is already an economic development plan and he is unaware of where it came from. There was discussion on whether the City had a recreational master plan and an economic development plan.

Chair Martinez asked if the economic development plan was new and City Planner Holland replied that it is an old plan.

City Planner Holland explained that the plan that was formulated for the Downtown area was a good plan and succeeded, for as long as the City had Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

Discussion ensued regarding a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) and whether or not they are effective.

Committee member Suco explained that the Treat's building is an issue because the new owner increased the rent to cover expenses.

Chair Martinez said that it is very frustrating because there is no plan and the entire Downtown area might become vacant before something is done. Mom & Pop businesses cannot afford a downturn in the economy and the City is not doing anything to make the area look better other than in Code Enforcement. He mentioned that he has heard of a couple of people who are interested in the Hook Square building.

Committee member Suco stated that it is less expensive to tear down the building than fix it and that is a problem. The other part of the problem is that here in the City, one person does not know what the other is doing.

Discussion ensued regarding concerns that the City is over charging business owners for wanting to improve their commercial building.

Chair Martinez commented that the City does not have a reputation of being business friendly and the City should have something to offer and not make it difficult for people to take a chance.

Chair Martinez met with former City Manager Borgmann regarding an agreement with Buffalo Wings and he asked if the City could work with them to waive fees and nothing has been done. The City cannot put a plan in place to entice businesses to come to the City.

City Planner Holland stated that one way of attracting developments is having incentives and the City does not have any.

Chair Martinez commented that the City would not be giving up revenue that they already have.

Committee member Suco stated that the \$97,000 expense for signage on Curtiss Parkway and Deer Run is extreme. He asked if there is any other signage available that would look nice and solve the issue.

Vice Chair Stiff would recommend termination of any future contracts with Calvin, Giordano. He sees a pattern of poor performance and would not give them another chance.

When asked, City Planner Holland explained that the contract with the consultants has an out clause and can be terminated at any time by either party.

Committee member Saborido agreed with Vice Chair Stiff but noted that representatives from Calvin, Giordano and Associates are not here to defend themselves and to give the board the answers to the issues that are being brought up.

Vice Chair Stiff made a motion to recommend that the City Council terminate the contract with Calvin, Giordano and not issue any further work orders. The motion was seconded by Committee member Rabade.

Committee member Saborido reiterated that he would like to hear from the consultants on the issues that are being brought up and on other items such as why they could not write the adult regulations.

Discussion ensued regarding the cost for Calvin, Giordano to answer questions during a meeting.

Chairman Martinez asked how much Calvin, Giordano charged to meet with staff on a monthly basis and City Planner Holland responded that they charge \$150.00 per hour, plus meeting preparation time.

Committee member Rabade said that the City Planner has the information since he attends the Staff meetings with Calvin, Giordano. The information is being shared with the Administrative Staff and it would not make sense for the consultants to come to a Revitalization and Redevelopment meeting to explain their actions again.

Chairman Martinez clarified that Calvin, Giordano is working on specific items with Staff and he feels that Committee member Saborido wants answers to certain questions. He tends to agree with Committee member Saborido that before recommending termination of their services they should be available to answer questions.

Committee member Rabade feels that this process is ridiculous. Professionals were hired because of their expertise in this area and it has been 2-1/2 years and nothing has been done. He finds it hard to believe that the demonstration on Curtiss Parkway and Deer Run would cost \$97,000.

City Planner Holland noted that all communication from Calvin, Giordano was through Council until Staff began insisting on monthly meetings with the consultants. The Staff could not see the information until it was presented at a Council Meeting.

Committee member Saborido questioned if Calvin, Giordano are being given poor directions.

Vice Chair Stiff commented that part of the reason that he made the motion was because of a list of issues with the 36th Street code that Calvin, Giordano essentially wrote in part with an apparent lack of knowledge of the interaction between the City's codes and Airport codes in which Calvin, Giordano knew existed when they answered the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Vice Chair Stiff reiterated that the consultants should have known more about Miami Springs. The City pays Calvin, Giordano for everything they do and they should have known that the City cannot afford the expense. He feels that they are incompetent and the consultants should have known if there were available grant funds.

Chairman Martinez stated that the Board was under the assumption that grants would be available in order to get a lot of this done. Throughout the process, one of his biggest disappointments has been that the City has waited a long time to find out that they do not qualify for a lot of the grants.

City Planner Holland clarified that the Grant Writer advised Calvin, Giordano that no funds were available for which the City could qualify.

Vice Chair Stiff said that with the amount of errors in the 36th Street zoning, he has no confidence in Calvin, Giordano and that is why he wanted to make a motion and take a vote.

Vice Chair Stiff reiterated that his motion is to recommend that Council terminate Calvin Giordano as soon as possible.

Committee member Saborido asked if the board wants the City to utilize the services of Calvin, Giordano in the future.

Vice Chair Stiff stated that the City should no longer use the services of Calvin, Giordano. He suggested going to the second or third candidates on the list of companies who responded to the Request for Qualifications and see what they have to offer.

Committee member Saborido asked City Planner Holland how much a marketing study would cost and City Planner Holland replied that it probably would cost no more than \$30,000.

Discussion ensued regarding Miami Springs being an island separated by the railroad, airport and canal and people must be drawn from outside the area.

Committee member Saborido noted that the land value in Miami Springs is not what residents expect it to be because there is no revenue coming into the area and there is no market share.

Vice Chair Stiff commented that the City cannot be giving funds to open businesses and there should be a balance. Permit fee credits of \$60,000 were given to Airbus and the City did not get any investment in return.

Committee member Saborido suggested having a marketing study done by university students and Committee member Rabade noted that the City had already attempted something of that nature.

Committee member Saborido stated that the consultants keep charging the City and if their work is not what the City wants the question to answer is why the City is still paying them.

Chair Martinez asked to consider if Calvin, Giordano should be given the chance to come to a meeting and talk to the Revitalization and Redevelopment Ad-Hoc Committee before making a recommendation to terminate them.

Board member Suco asked the Chairman to consider who the Revitalization and Redevelopment Ad-Hoc Committee members are because it is the City Council that makes the decision to pay or not pay the consultants.

Chair Martinez commented that the Revitalization and Redevelopment Ad-Hoc Committee can request that the City Council authorize the expense, even if it is \$1,000, to attend a meeting. Whether or not Council grants the request is another story. The Committee can also request that they fire the consultants, but they might not decide to do that either; the Committee works in an advisory capacity to voice their opinions and Council takes action.

Committee member Suco stated that the City Planner had to fix problems that the consultants created with the zoning code and the City does needs a marketing study. He has contacts in the development business that have told him that they do not want to be the first to invest in the City until there is something to offer them. The marketing study would be a positive step and the airport is booming.

Committee member Suco suggested checking with the County or another city to see if there are any marketing studies that were done within the past two years.

City Planner Holland commented that there are normally proprietary rights on the studies and the information is not broadcasted.

Further discussion ensued regarding the value of marketing studies.

Chair Martinez asked the Committee members to consider the motion that is on the floor.

Committee member Saborido reiterated that the Committee should not make a decision until representatives from Calvin, Giordano are present with all the stakeholders.

Chair Martinez called for a vote at this time.

The motion was carried 3-2 on roll call vote with Chairman Martinez and Committee member Saborido casting the dissenting votes.

Committee member Saborido moved to request that Calvin, Giordano and the City Administration be present at a Special meeting to determine whether or not to terminate the contract.

The Secretary of the Board asked Mr. Saborido to clarify what type of meeting he is recommending.


Committee member Saborido clarified that he would like a special meeting with Council, the Revitalization and Redevelopment Ad-Hoc Committee and representatives from Calvin, Giordano.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Committee member Saborido stated that his fear is that there is an obvious communication break down and he cannot understand if Calvin, Giordano is incompetent and they are milking the City for money, or if they are somehow being told what to do by Council without involving the City Administration. He feels that having all stakeholders in the room at one time is the solution and the next time a consultant is hired the same situation does not happen. It seems that the real issue is communication.

4. Adjourn

The meeting was duly adjourned at 8:54 p.m.


Suzanne S. Hittaffer
Board Secretary

Transcription assistance provided by Elora R. Sakal.

Approved as written on 10-15-2012.

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